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THE SITUATION IN FINLAND.

BY FINLANDER.

Soon after the death of Alexander II., the reactionists obtained the predominating influence in the direction of Russia's home policy. The most influential man among these reactionists was Pobiedonostseff, Procurator-General of the Holy Synod and a member of the Committee of Ministers and of the State Council. Political freedom in his eyes is a most dangerous disease, which is ruining the Western nations. Only an autocratic power can protect its subjects against destructive agitations, and maintain order and discipline among them, to the benefit of all. The spread of knowledge among the masses only leads to misfortune. For the people, the Church should maintain a simple and uncritical belief in dogmas, wrapt in mystic obscurity.

The idea of Russifying all the heterogeneous races under the sceptre of the Tsar by force, was not raised to a maxim of government as long as any interest in a liberal policy of reform still remained alive. But as soon as the reactionary movement began to predominate, it allied itself with the Pan-Russian nationalist tendencies. The government systematically began to smother all manifestations of independent cultural development in the non-Russian nations within the Russian State.

The constitution of the Grand-Duchy of Finland had been solemnly and irrevocably confirmed on the union of the country with Russia in 1809. As Finland, in consequence, had its own legislation, its own government, its home policy, one was justified in assuming that the reactionary and nationalist tendency in Russia would not involve any danger for Finland.

During Alexander II.'s time, Finland had passed through a period of many-sided and intensive progress. In his capacity as Grand-Duke of Finland, the Emperor loyally took up his position

on the foundation of the Finnish Constitution. The organization of the Diet was reformed by a new fundamental law in 1869. Legislation in other directions was extensively developed. The self-government of the communes was adjusted to suit the requirements of the times. Liberty of industry took the place of the antiquated guild-system. The construction of a large system of railways was energetically begun. The gold standard was introduced; the state bank was reformed and placed under the supervision of the Diet; private credit establishments were instituted. Public education was emancipated from the control of the Church; the primary schools were thoroughly and practically organized. All this reforming activity was securely based upon the social order, founded on justice and freedom, that constituted an inheritance from the past centuries in which Finland had been a part of the Swedish State.

This precious inheritance, however, also had its dark side: the community with Swedish political life resulted in the Swedish language becoming the only official language and the language of higher education, although it was only spoken by a minority of the Finnish people. After the separation from Sweden, this had to be remedied. The Finnish language had to get the place due to it in political and intellectual life. The path was prepared by devoted work for the growth of the Finnish language and literature, and the foundation of this reform, too, had been laid during the reign of Alexander II.—according to the principle of equal rights, in point of language, for both the nationalities, Finnish and Swedish, that together make up the politically united people of Finland. Finally, it may be mentioned that the Finnish Diet, on Alexander II.'s proposition, passed a law in 1878 constituting universal service as the basis of the Finnish military system.

Alexander III., as Grand-Duke of Finland, followed the same policy as his father during the greater part of his reign. The Diet, which, according to the Law of 1869, is to assemble at least every five years, was convoked every third year. Thus, the joint work of the Government and the Representatives of the People was made easier. The Emperor Grand-Duke, accompanied by his noble-minded consort and his children, frequently visited Finland during the summer. On these journeys, the mode of life led by the Imperial Family was idyllic and free from all ceremony. The monarch had no need to fear those dangers that threatened him

in Russia. A simple and cordial homage was offered him by all classes of society.

But, in those circles of St. Petersburg and Moscow where the retrograde course in Russian policy was laid down, the picture of lawful order, civil liberty and cultured progress that Finland offered was regarded with hostile eyes. In 1881, the Russian press began a campaign, the object of which was to throw suspicion on the loyalty of the Finnish nation, and to create and disseminate the idea that the interests and honor of the Empire demanded the political and national amalgamation of Finland. The leaders of this campaign, which grew in vigor year by year, did not hesitate to employ any expedient to attain their object. Truth, justice and reason were scandalously set aside.

In any case, the claim ought to have been proved that respect for Finland's rights was in conflict with Russia's interests. Such proof has never been offered either by the press or in official documents. But incorrect statements were disseminated, false representations made, and passions stirred. It would lead too far here to quote examples of such biassed and untruthful assertions as were offered to the Russian public through the press in countless numbers. The chief statements which it was attempted to illustrate by means of forged anecdotes or distorted opinions were, that the educated classes in Finland were hostile to Russia, and that the leading Finnish politicians, especially those belonging to the Swedish party, were *Separatists*. The charge of separatism was the one which was most eagerly employed to serve the purpose. It was useless trying to refute such allegations by pointing to the fact that no political party in Finland has ever expressed opinions of a separatist nature. The imputations continued, and the public were finally led to believe that there was some foundation for them.

The first *official* utterances of the policy of amalgamation appeared in 1889. Alexander III. had been persuaded that it was incompatible with Russia's interests for Finland to have a separate system of customs, a separate coinage, and a separate postal establishment; *unity* ought to be effected in these concerns. Committees of Russians and Finns were established to make proposals for such a unification. The Finnish members demonstrated the impossibility of unifying the Finnish monetary system, in which only gold coins are legal tender, and the Russian system of credit

notes, which are not redeemable in metallic currency. It was also proved that the Russian customs tariff was quite unsuitable to Finland, and that the continuance of the customs-frontier between the two countries was necessary even from the point of view of Russia's financial interests, while the excise dues on corn-brandy, beer and tobacco could not be worked in common. The proposals for the unification of coinage and customs fell through. But in June, 1890, a manifesto was issued that decreed that the management of the Finnish postal system should be centred in the Home Office of the Empire. This was opposed to the Constitution of Finland, according to which all State institutions must be subject to the Finnish government. Another violation of the fundamental law occurred in 1891, when it was ordained that the posts of officials at the Finnish Secretariate of State at St. Petersburg, and at the Governor-General's Secretary's office at Helsingfors, were to be filled, not only by Finns, but also by Russians.

Finland's Constitution is not summed up in a single fundamental law or charter. It is contained in two chief laws: the Form of Government, and the law on the organization of the representation of the people. The last named was reformed by means of a fundamental law promulgated in 1869, called the "Law of the Diet." The Form of Government of 1772 had, in the course of time, been altered in certain respects by partial legislative measures. To remodel that part of the Constitution by means of a codification was of importance for giving its interpretation perfect clearness. By order of the Emperor, a scheme for a codified fundamental law was drawn up by the Finnish Senate and submitted to the Emperor in 1891, with the request that it might be referred to the Diet for examination.

There was, therefore, absolutely no question here of political reforms that could affect the power of the monarch, nor of any change in the relation of the Grand-Duchy towards the Empire, but only of a *formal* remodelling of the above-mentioned part of the Finnish Constitution. Nevertheless, Russian statesmen of the anti-Finnish party set about meddling in the matter. They feared lest the political position of Finland should gain increased clearness and firmness if the new fundamental law were passed. And it was therefore so arranged that the Emperor entrusted a committee of Russian and Finnish statesmen with the examination of the Senate's proposal, before taking it up himself for consideration.

The five Russian members of this committee succeeded in carrying their point against the four Finnish members, *i. e.*, that the committee should not enter into an examination of the Senate's proposal, but should first take up an entirely new question for discussion, namely, the establishment of a new plan for the issuing of laws common to the Empire and the Grand-Duchy in all matters affecting the interests of the two countries. The Russian State-Council was to be the organ that should definitely prepare such legislative matters as were to be submitted to the Emperor's decision. The Finnish members of the committee protested against this proposal, and pointed out that a plan of this sort, that encroached upon the rights of the Finnish Diet, could in no case be carried through without the consent of the Diet. When the proposal for this common legislation was laid before Alexander III., in March, 1893, he appears to have attached importance to this protest, for he resolved that the proposal should not be debated in the Russian State-Council without his special command. But the question of codifying the Form of Government was *also* laid aside at the same time. Early in 1894 the Diet issued an address to the monarch, expressing the firm hope that no legislative steps resulting from the proposals of the majority of the said committee should be taken without due reference to the Diet.

It is probable that this utterance increased the Emperor's scruples about the proposal, and that, before his death, he had himself mentioned these misgivings to his son, the heir-apparent; because, when, in 1895, de Plehve requested the Emperor Nicholas II.'s permission to discuss the matter in council, the latter answered that he did not consider the proposed plan expedient.

When this reply of the Emperor became known in political circles in Finland, it awakened great satisfaction, since by it he had rejected an insidious attempt to undermine the constitutional legislative order in Finland. No fresh threatening clouds appeared on the horizon during the early years of his reign. The Diet met for the first time after his accession in January, 1897. In his speech from the throne, Nicholas II. said among other things: "It is with the greatest satisfaction that I express to you, as representatives of all the Estates of the Finnish people, my gratitude for the staunch fidelity and devotion which this people has always shown to its sovereigns."

But the Pobiedonostseff party continued to brood over the plan

of annihilating Finnish internal independence. An attempt was made, in the first place, to prevent the Imperial couple's journey to Helsingfors, and to instil suspicion into the Emperor's mind as to the loyalty of the Finns. What means were used for this purpose, is only partly known. These intrigues consisted in part of libels against Finnish statesmen, and in part of misrepresentations of the legal questions with regard to Finland's political position. To this were added fine speeches about the Emperor's august mission with respect to the unity of the Empire, from a constitutional as well as a linguistic and national point of view.

By the provisions of the Finnish Military Service act, it appertained to the Russian Minister of War to take cognizance of, and to report to the monarch upon, such matters affecting the Finnish army as did not relate to legislation or to the command of the troops. These last-named matters fell within the province of the Finnish Senate, and were to be reported to the monarch by the Secretary of State for Finland, after the Minister of War had stated his views. In spite of this, proposals as to new laws relating to the Finnish army had been planned at the Russian Ministry of War. Kuropatkin, then Minister of War, prevailed upon the Emperor to summon the Finnish Diet to an extraordinary session in January, 1899, to deal with the so-called "military reform."

The "reform" consisted chiefly in the dissolution of the Finnish army, with the exception of the Guard, the introduction of regulations for military service similar to the Russian, the obligation imposed on the young men of Finland to serve in the Russian ranks. In the proposition to the Diet, it was declared that this change was required by the necessity for unifying the army of the Empire. The reason assigned was but an empty phrase, for the Finnish troops were organized, trained and armed on the same system as the Russian. The real aim of the reform was to make a breach in the institutions of Finland, and to Russify the Finnish youth by means of a military service of several years in Russia.

General Bobrikoff was appointed Governor-General of Finland in the autumn of 1898. He and de Plehve now hit upon the idea of dispensing with the consent of the Diet to the reform. The proposal for common legislation between Russia and Finland, which had been lying since 1893 in the archives of the Russian State-Council, was brought out of its pigeon-hole. The Emperor's frame of mind was no longer the same as formerly. He permitted

a summoning of a secret committee that was to hurry on the final draft of the said proposal. And, on the 15th of February (new style), 1899, a manifesto was issued containing "fundamental statutes for the preparation, revision, and promulgation of laws issued for the Empire, including the Grand-Duchy of Finland."

In the secret committee which drew up the manifesto, legal science was represented by Pobiedonostseff, by the Minister of Justice, by the President of the Law Department in the State Council, and by the Secretary of the Empire, de Plehve. It is surprising that these lawyers did not understand that the Finnish legislative powers, which are organized according to constitutional principles, cannot be brought into cooperation or collaboration with the autocratic legislative power of the Empire. They ought also to have understood that an alteration in Finland's fundamental law, of such a nature that the monarch alone should be empowered to decide upon legal questions, would be a legal nullity, since it was to take place without the consent of the Diet.

Dismay and indignation were aroused everywhere in Finland when the manifesto of February 15th, 1899, was issued. The Senate and the Diet immediately sent a deputation to St. Petersburg, to present to the Emperor a memorial in which the incompatibility of the manifesto with the fundamental laws of Finland was emphasized, and it was requested that such measures might be taken as would render the country secure from any unconstitutional application of the manifesto. The deputation was not received. Citizens from all parts of the country, to the number of 530,000, signed an address to the monarch, expressing the sorrow and anxiety of the people as to the manifesto, and begging that the country's fundamental laws might be respected. The address was sent to St. Petersburg with a deputation of 500 representatives of the different parishes. The deputation was not received.

Meantime, the Diet went on with the examination of the military scheme. They found it impossible to approve of it. The representatives of the Finnish people could not cooperate in the establishment of a law that was to change military service into a punishment of exile for the youth of Finland.

The Diet, when it declined the proposal made by the Russian War Office, resolved to alter the Military Service Bill of 1878 in certain parts, so as to bring it more into conformity with the Russian system, and to increase the country's sacrifices for defence

by doubling the active army on a peace footing. And the Judicial Committee of the Diet drew up a detailed judicial exposition to show that the February manifesto was opposed to the Constitution.

In the address to the monarch, in which the military proposals were replied to, the Diet declared *inter alia*:

"That the manifesto of February 15th, 1899, having been issued in a form differing from that prescribed by the fundamental law, could not have the sanctity of law;

"that no law concerning military service for the inhabitants of Finland can be issued, unless it has been accepted by the Diet, without violating the Finnish Constitution; and

"that the Diet consider it their duty, based upon the highest considerations, to hold fast to the law and the right, which in the year 1809 were solemnly guaranteed to the Finnish people to be irrevocably maintained."

The period of conflict had set in all over Finland. It was and it is not only a conflict between the monarch, who oversteps the constitutional limits of his powers, and the people and its representatives, who endeavor to defend the law. It is a conflict between the Russian power, that illegally and destructively intervenes in the political life of Finland, and the Finnish nation in its entirety fighting for its existence. It is, moreover, a conflict between Eastern despotism and Western principles of justice and love for law-abiding freedom.

But were there then no real reasons, no needs founded upon experience, which required such common legislation as was prescribed in the manifesto?

No; even from a practical point of view such legislative procedure is quite unnecessary. Ever since Finland's union with Russia, a number of questions referring to both countries' mutual interests have been settled in such a way that the proper Russian and Finnish authorities, by means of negotiations, have agreed on the necessary legislative measures, which have been issued in both countries after receiving the monarch's consent. The questions have thus been regulated according to the principles of reciprocity.

After the military question had been dealt with by the Diet, it was, in accordance with the February manifesto, submitted to the Russian State Council. This was at variance with the universal rule, according to which laws have no retroactive effect, least of all laws affecting procedure. As a matter of fact, the military bill, which was already being dealt with by the Diet when the mani-

festó appeared, had been prepared in a different way from that prescribed by the manifesto. In the Russian Council of State, the majority had expressed themselves *against* the War Minister's bill, and acknowledged the Diet's principal objections as justified. Then Kuropatkin, Bobrikoff and de Plehve formed an extraordinary committee, which modified certain parts of the bill prepared by the Diet and the Russian State-Council, and procured the Emperor's sanction to the law which these gentlemen wished to issue. Of course no attention was paid to the Diet's decision. Arbitrariness triumphed.

And this is the only time that the manifesto has been applied. The reason of this is simply that no such questions have arisen as could possibly require joint legislation.

But, one may ask, as the February manifesto has not been applied since then, has it really been such a peril for the Finnish Constitution?

It has been and it is a peril, because the Russian reactionists have considered it to be an official authorization of their endeavor to encroach upon Finland's rights.

The reactionary camarilla succeeded in the autumn of 1889 in getting the Secretary of the Empire, de Plehve, nominated as Secretary of State for Finland. He did not scruple in the least to accept this post, although he knew that his nomination was a breach of Finland's fundamental law. The report of Finnish matters of State was thus entrusted to a man who was not only entirely unacquainted with Finland's laws and national life, but moreover ill-disposed towards the country.

It was declared in the February manifesto that the joint legislation should embrace such laws as touched the interests of both Russia and Finland. Further the manifesto contained the explicit statement that laws relating exclusively to the internal affairs of Finland should continue to be made in accordance with the statutes hitherto in force in the Grand-Duchy. But de Plehve pointed out to the Emperor in a written memorial that the Russian Autocrat's power can in no wise be bound by the laws of conquered Finland. After having gained a willing ear to this doctrine, which with justice has been characterized as "juridical nihilism," he was free, together with his confederate Bobrikoff, to set about the ruin of Finland's institutions.

In June, 1900, an Imperial Manifesto was issued which enacted

that Russian should be the official language of Finland in the higher administration of affairs, instead of the national languages, Finnish and Swedish. This was a violation both of the fundamental law and of the people's national rights. How absurd this was, moreover, from a practical point of view, will be easily understood if one considers that, out of Finland's 2,800,000 inhabitants, only 7,000 speak Russian as their mother tongue. In order to be able to fulfil the provisions of the manifesto, capable officials, who do not know Russian, must be replaced by persons chosen from amongst the small number who have succeeded in learning some Russian, but who are otherwise unqualified for the positions in question. It has now been prescribed that instruction in Russian should be compulsory in the schools.

With respect to the anti-constitutional military law, published in July, 1901, the purpose was not to reform the military system, but to Russify the conscripts. What impression this autocratic measure made was immediately seen by the fact that half a million citizens, in an address to the monarch, declared that the Finnish people could not recognize this law, issued without the consent of the Diet, as valid, and that no one was obliged to conform to it. On account of that, the government have not yet dared to enforce it: hitherto, no recruits have been drafted into the Russian ranks. The authorities have been content so far to summon only those, about 200 in number, who are necessary for filling up the ranks of the Finnish Guard, out of the 25,000 young men who are to be called out annually. This conscription comedy, repeated annually since 1902, has, however, had its deeply tragical side. A number of loyal officials have been dismissed because they refused to assist in carrying out this illegal military decree. Thousands of the conscripts have, for the same reason, refused to let themselves be enrolled, and are therefore suffering various kinds of punishment or persecution.

The organization of the Finnish government has been ruined by transferring to the Governor-General important parts of the right of decision which, according to the principles of the Constitution, ought to belong to the Senate, the incorporated Board of Government. Every prominent and independent man has been removed from the Senate. The Emperor has appointed as their successors such persons as Bobrikoff has recommended.

The independence of the courts of justice was safeguarded by

the irremovability of the judges. This irremovability has been abolished. All the functionaries who have remained faithful to the Constitution have been removed from their posts.

Contrary to the fundamental law, it has been decreed that Russians should be admitted to all employments in Finland. It is no longer even required that they should have any knowledge of the laws of Finland or of the Swedish or Finnish languages. In all government offices where Russians have been appointed, the good order that prevailed before has been disturbed.

According to law, every private citizen had a right to prosecute in a court of law any official who, as such, had violated his rights or done him any injury. This important legal guarantee has been abolished, inasmuch as now the permission of the Governor-General or of other superior authority is required before one is allowed to prosecute an official. The right to form societies for purposes of general utility has been subjected to arbitrary restrictions. The right to discuss matters of public interest at meetings has been made dependent on the permission of the police authorities. The censorship of printed matter which was formerly exercised with liberality has been preposterously aggravated.

The police in Finland used to be a well-regulated, loyal body, which performed its duties conscientiously in the service of order and justice. Now it is a demoralized instrument for political persecutions. The police budget has been largely increased. Moreover, the country has been favored with a strong body of Russian gendarmes, which, for a yearly consideration of 680,000 marks out of the Finnish Treasury, practises espionage and commits acts of violence against peaceful citizens.

The Finns are not an irritable people. Calmness and deliberation, patience and resignation are among their characteristic traits. But to submit without resistance to a tyrannical régime, which cynically tramples on law and justice, would be tantamount to acquiescing in one's own debasement. Resistance was necessary. The prevailing opinion in the matter may be expressed in these sentences: "It is our duty to endeavor to safeguard the laws of the land. In so doing, we must ourselves abide by the principles of law. In resisting tyranny, we must not make use of other than lawful means." In conformity with this, Finnish opposition has expressed itself principally in the refusal, not only of officials, but also of private citizens, to execute ordinances and edicts that are

opposed to the fundamental law or to other laws,—and, in the devoted work of upholding and spreading within the country the love of, and loyalty to, its Constitution. It is easy to see what difficulties this work has encountered, for all public discussion is suppressed. The difficulties have been added to by the existence of a government party, led by such Finns as have considered it to be the wisest policy to yield to the demands of might, in the hope that the monarch might some day change his sentiments, and give Finland back her rights.

Bobrikoff did not understand that ideas are a power that cannot be forcibly coerced. He wanted to put an end to all opposition. He and de Plehve had held out to the Emperor the prospect, that the inoffensive Finnish people would very soon yield to His Majesty's gracious will,—for it would, forsooth, be an honor for this little nation to be amalgamated with the great Russian State, and to come under the control of the mighty autocracy! In order that absolute quiet might soon reign in the country, the only thing necessary was vigorously to check the agitation that was still being carried on by "evil-minded" persons. For this purpose the Governor-General ought to be invested with the unlimited powers of a Dictator. The Emperor agreed to this in a statute of April 3rd, 1903, "as to measures for the maintenance of order in the State and of public peace." It was clear to everybody that this statute ought properly to have been headed a statute "to empower the Governor-General further to disturb order in the State and the public peace by means of the illegal persecution of any one who opposes the revolutionary policy of the Government."

This statute empowered Bobrikoff to make the inhabitants of Finland more intimately acquainted with the fully developed police tyranny as practised in Russia. He interfered with the independence of the Communes by dismissing functionaries elected by them, who had been reported as being faithful to the laws. He sent his gendarmes to force their way into the houses of prominent men, in order to examine, seize, and carry off their papers and books. He got the police to imprison and brutally ill-treat innocent persons with an arbitrariness that had no limits. He exiled about fifty honored citizens for no other reason than that they were looked upon as being disposed to favor the opposition. Bobrikoff's violent goings-on and widespread espionage increased the difficulties of opposition, of course; but it also intensified the ill-feel-

ing and the hatred against those in power. The wounded sense of justice found expression, in the spring of 1904, in mass-meetings of working-people, whose resolutions culminated in the cry, "Down with autocracy, down with Bobrikoff, Plehve, and the Senators"! On June 16th, a young Finnish nobleman discharged his revolver against Bobrikoff. It was the deed of a single person. He at once destroyed himself. He therefore cannot give us a description of the struggles of his soul, and the despair which drove him to take vengeance on the oppressor of his country. And yet even those who maintain that the law is never to be set aside, and who deprecate the political murder, find it hard to judge harshly a deed, the victim of which had so ruthlessly injured the rights of Finland and the vital interests of its people.

If now the question be raised whether Russia has derived advantage and benefit from this new policy which has been so destructive to Finland, the answer cannot be other than decidedly negative. The bond of union has not been strengthened, since the moral factors, respect and trust, without which no political union can have solidity, are destroyed when one of the members illegally and oppressively interferes with the existence of the other. The policy of Russification can attain no other result than a continual irritation, for Finland's people no longer stands on such a low level of culture that it can be denationalized. Russia's economic interests suffer injury when the disturbance of legal order in Finland hinders the economic progress of the country, and thus reduces the sale of Russian products there. And, last but not least, the reputation of the Russian Government has been severely damaged abroad by this policy of violence against Finland. The official world of St. Petersburg has feigned indifference to the severe judgment passed everywhere upon its policy. But, at heart, it has been very painfully impressed by it none the less.

Since it has become known in Finland, during these last years, of what nature the forces are which, under the ægis of autocracy, drive the political machinery in St. Petersburg, we cannot hope for a satisfactory solution of the conflict until an entire change of system has been carried out in Russia. When a method of government, founded on justice, has there taken the place of the arbitrary exercise of power, then Finland may count on due respect being meted out to its Constitution.